



Wings to Fly – Scholarships and Leadership Training for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

What is the Wings to Fly program?

The Wings to Fly Program is a public-private partnership between the Equity Group Foundation, Mastercard Foundation, UKaid and USAID. The program provides full scholarships that include tuition, room, and board to enable academically gifted but economically disadvantaged and vulnerable children to pursue secondary and tertiary education. USAID's contribution of \$17.5 million will provide for comprehensive scholarships, leadership training, and mentoring to at least 2,166 Wings to Fly scholars over a five year period. Overall, the initiative will support 10,000 young Kenyans with access to a full secondary education by 2019. The selected young people also receive leadership development, career guidance, and personal mentoring to help them maximize their potential.



Photo: USAID/Natasha Murigu

These girls from Chuka High School in Meru, Kenya are benefitting from the Wings to Fly scholarship program

Project Duration and Budget

November 2011 – November 2016

\$17.5 million USAID Contribution

\$67 million Total Contributions

Who implements Wings to Fly?

Equity Group Foundation

<http://www.ke.equitybankgroup.com>

Where does Wings to Fly work?

Nationwide

What does Wings to Fly do?

The scholarships are widely advertised in the media as well as through community and religious organizations and the transparent selection process is managed by a District Scholarship Selection Board of 12 local representatives. Although Equity Bank manages the funds to ensure that the scholars' fees are paid on time, the bank helps the students to open bank accounts where they receive their stipends, teaching them early on about financial management. The students are encouraged to save and are mentored along the way to help boost their self-esteem, monitor their progress, and encourage them to rise above their circumstances.

How is Wings to Fly making a difference?

While free primary education has helped more Kenyan children access basic schooling, many from poor backgrounds find themselves unable to get a secondary or higher education. Without the proper training and skills to achieve their career aspirations, a large number of young people wind up unemployed and vulnerable. By giving more youth a chance at a better education, the Wings to Fly Program is helping Kenyans drive their own development agenda by working towards a nation with educated, self-reliant and productive youths.

To date 3,484 students have been selected for scholarships – of those, USAID is supporting 1,136 including 568 girls and 568 boys from all 47 Counties of Kenya. These young people are attending 398 different schools across the country.

There are an additional 500 scholars under the USAID-Equity Group Foundation Leadership and Scholarship program enrolled in secondary and tertiary institutions who were initially funded under a program administered by PriceWaterHouseCoopers.

What key challenges does Wings to Fly face?

Some of the participating schools have been reluctant to share challenges they are facing with particular students

until it's too late to intervene. To address this, the Equity Group Foundation and the mentoring teams are increasing the frequency of visits to school administrators and with the students themselves in order to address any issues quickly and upfront. Additionally, a number of students have had difficulty with their eyesight - a problem resulting from dim lighting in the homes where the young people have been studying. The program is now providing scholars with vision exams and eyeglasses if needed.

Wings to Fly in Action

January 2011 marked a new beginning for 27-year-old Robert Mwenda. When his parents passed away during his childhood he was forced to drop out of school and fend for himself by doing odd jobs. The streets became his new home and other street children were the only family he knew. Standing between him and his dreams was education. When a well-wisher offered to help him complete primary school under the Kenya government's Free Primary Education Program, Mwenda jumped at the chance and managed to pass his exams. Although he was offered a place at a good high school, his new guardian was no longer able to provide for the increased school expenses. Once again Mwenda's future seemed bleak.

But by March 2012, Mwenda was among thousands of youth who joined their new high schools to begin a four year secondary education. He had earned himself a scholarship through the Wings to Fly Program, and this time, nothing would stop him from becoming a medical doctor. "This scholarship has opened doors for me and I am determined to become a good doctor so that I can help others in my community," he says.

Equity Group Foundation mentorship program officer John Kipkemboi reflects, "This program really gives the scholars wings to fly by giving them education as well as mentoring. This gives them proper role models and instills a sense of responsibility and giving back to society.

For More Information

<http://www.ke.equitybankgroup.com>

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Photo: USAID/Natasha Murigu

Wings to Fly scholar Robert Mwenda with classmates. Robert aims to become a doctor and give back to his community.